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ARTICLE VI.

PROFESSOR PARK'S THEOLOGICAL SYSTEM.¹

BY THE REVEREND FRANK HUGH FOSTER, PH. D., D. D.

THE remaining portions of Park's theological system were treated by him under the heads of Regeneration, Sanctification, and Eschatology. They will possess interest for us rather as showing the application of his main principles, and illustrating more fully his theological spirit, than as presenting us with anything that is essentially new.

REGENERATION.

Park began, as usual, with pointing out the relation of regeneration to the other doctrines of theology. The doctrine did not stand alone, it was a doctrine in a system, depending upon others and itself contributing to still others.

His definition was careful. Regeneration is "the change from a state of entire sinfulness to a state of some degree of holiness." As such, it was "the first change," differing from all other, subsequent changes, such as the repentance by which a Christian who has fallen into sin comes back to his duty, both in its origin and in the fact that it is of a fundamental character. It is also viewed by Park as the whole of the complex change from sin to holiness, and not merely, as some say, the divine side of the change. Regeneration thus embraces two elements, divine and human, but they are not so separated by Park as to assign them two separate terms, regeneration and conversion. Such a distinction had its advantages, but

¹ Concluded from p. 291.

upon the whole Park preferred merely to say that "conversion was the most important part of comprehensive regeneration."

Analyzing it more particularly, regeneration involves a change of the primary, predominant choice. It may be questioned whether there is any such fixed and conscious choice before regeneration, but after it there is such a choice, which is recognized by the Christian as determinative of his whole life. It has "stopped the old habit of uninterrupted sin" and has "introduced the new habit of holiness." "It is not merely a holy choice, but the first one of a series; and not merely that, but an influential choice which stands so related to the former and subsequent states of the moral agent that it breaks up the continuity of the sinful habit and introduces a new habit." It also involves a change in the sensibilities and a change in the intellect, such that, in the order of nature, the change in these precedes that in the will; but in the order of time there is no priority of either over the other, for, as a whole, regeneration is instantaneous.

These preliminary and explanatory considerations are no sooner completed than the fact becomes clear that the treatment of the subject is to be determined by the philosophy of revivals which had grown up in the revival atmosphere of New England in the early half of the last century. Professor Park had himself been a revival preacher, and drew to the last some of his most illuminating illustrations from his experience with his parishioners in Braintree in revival times. The two perpetual tendencies of his system join here again in conflict, the Calvinistic tendency, to exalt God, which is brought out in his doctrine that God is "the sole author" of regeneration; and the practical interest of the pastor to clear away obstacles and stimulate activity on the part of sinners and so eventually

to elicit the act of conversion. These chapters contain, therefore, a philosophy of revivals.

Thus, in the very "analysis," with the main points of which we were just now busy, he guards against the idea that the advocated "change in the intellectual view" of the man should necessarily involve new knowledge; for then the unrepentant man would not be responsible for not having yielded to knowledge which he did not have. It may be merely a new vividness of the old ideas. The emphasis placed by the very term regeneration upon the agency of the Holy Spirit is not to lead to inactivity, for man is not responsible in any way for what God does; but he is responsible for repenting. This he can do, this he ought to do, and this he is to be exhorted to do immediately. This is the fullness of man's liberty.

And, then, with his usual breadth, Park refuses to limit regeneration to any one fixed scheme. Some revivalists were always attempting, as some do still, to produce a single type of experience, their favorite type, which they understood most fully and could guide most easily to the best final result. Thus, while the "antecedents of regeneration" were defined as "increased thoughtfulness, fear and alarm, conviction of sin, endeavor to secure the favor of God, despair of securing this by works," he said most explicitly that "we must not insist upon these antecedents in the *order* specified above, nor in any uniform *degree*, nor must we insist upon them at all as the ultimate or chief *aim* of the sinner, nor regard them as *conditions* which ensure regeneration." Experience varies as the individuals which undergo it vary. There is one, and one only, condition of salvation, and that is repentance and faith. We are to insist upon this one thing only, and to admire the ways of God in what he otherwise gives and does.

And now there enters again, and for the last time in this

review, that strange hesitation upon Park's part between freedom and determinism which characterizes his treatment of the will, to modify his treatment of regeneration. He is about to prove that God is the author of regeneration. By author, in this connection, he means the one who plans for a certain end, chooses it, adopts the means to bring it about, and actually employs these. God is the only one that thus has regeneration in mind, and thus effects it, and hence he is its only author. Park might have advanced here upon the straight road that lies before the determinist. He would then have said: God acts upon the sensibilities and the intellect directly and indirectly, and also sets in action trains of motives operating upon the will, and thus determines the whole man to the new act of repentance. God would thus have been made the author of conversion. But of this, because it is the act of the will, God could not be the author without becoming also the author of every other act of the will, and thus of sin. Hence man must be made the sole author of conversion, and God's authorship of regeneration must be proved by a method which shall leave out this element. But there is enough place, in the composite thing which regeneration had been defined to be, in the change of the intellect and the sensibility, for the action of God, and here it can be said to be a special, supernatural (in distinction from miraculous) exercise of his almighty power. Thus Park was landed in the strange position that God was the *sole* author of the whole comprehensive change called regeneration, while man was the equally *sole* author of the act of conversion, which is the central and vital thing about it all. He could have made a better distinction, and one which would have better conveyed, I am persuaded, his real thought, if he had asked the question, Who is the author of Conversion? and had answered this question by saying that both God and man

are its authors,—God in the sphere of *influence*, as the source of that series of influences which in their combined working lead ultimately to repentance, so that without them the man never does repent,—man in the sphere of *power*, because the final action which constitutes conversion, the choice, is entirely his, as the work of his free sovereignty.

Into the further definitions and distinctions of this subject we do not need here to enter, for it will be readily understood that Park would teach that the soul is both active and passive in regeneration, and that regeneration, while theoretically resistible, is practically unresisted. We pass, therefore, at once to the subject of

SANCTIFICATION.

This, according to Park, is the gradual development of holiness in the Christian under the guidance and by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The question is immediately suggested, What is holiness? and to the answer of this he turns first. One would think that it had already been abundantly answered in the discussions upon virtue which have been earlier reviewed. But Park now goes into the matter afresh, partly because he is considering it upon its human side, and partly because, since this is the place for the entrance of "ethics" into the system, it is the place to come to an understanding with divergent theories of morals, such as the utilitarian.

Virtue is therefore defined afresh, and this time as follows: "The preference of the greater and higher sentient being, on the ground of its value, above the less and lower sentient being." The definition does not differ in meaning from those already given, and we need spend no time now in elucidating that meaning.¹

The discussion of Utilitarianism is introduced under the

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 1x. p. 688 ff.

head of an objection to Park's own theory, that it is in essence the utilitarian theory. The utilitarian theory, he says, "pronounces happiness and the means to happiness the chief good and only good. This theory, on the contrary, makes happiness the lower good and holiness the higher. The utilitarian theory teaches that we have no idea of right apart from the tendency of an act to happiness. This theory asserts that right is a distinct idea. The utilitarian theory teaches that a thing is right because of its tendency, and hence that the love of the general happiness would be wrong if it did not promote the general happiness. This theory is that a thing has its tendency to happiness because it is right, and that right would be right whatever its tendency might be. In fact, there is a universally acknowledged distinction between the right and the useful."

Neither is a thing right because it is agreeable to the will of God. Benevolence, for example, is agreeable to the will of God, but it would be right and possess the attribute of imperative obligation if it were not agreeable to the will of God. Nor is right right because it is agreeable to the fitness of things. In opposition to all such theories Park taught that "right is a simple term, which can only be defined by reference to the occasions when the idea arises in the mind. Rightness, virtuousness, is that quality of an act which conscience approves, obligates us to practice, and feels complacence in; and which has a desert of reward. In other words, right is the correlate of conscience which perceives the right immediately and affirms our obligation to perform it." And, again, "benevolence is right in itself, eternally and immutably. It is right because it is right." Park sometimes called himself, in distinction from Utilitarians, a Rightarian.

Sanctification is the production of this holiness more and

more in the heart and life of the Christian. The agent of sanctification is the Holy Spirit. The means is the truth. It differs in no essential respect in its nature from regeneration, except that that is the introduction of the holy life, and is a fundamental reversal of what has gone before, while this is the consistent development of what is already begun, and the strengthening and deepening of holy habits, or distinct holy choices, in accordance with and in consequence of that first "primary, predominant" choice. We need, therefore, spend no more time upon this topic. Of course the great historical controversies into which American theology had fallen over these themes were sketched and illuminated; Oberlin had its share of attention, with sharp criticism of certain points, but in the most kindly spirit; but Park came out in nothing peculiar or calling for especial attention to-day.

Of Justification it is, also, unnecessary to add more than that he made it synonymous with forgiveness, stripping it of the forensic elements of the older Calvinism; and that he grounded it wholly in the atonement of Christ.

ESCHATOLOGY.

The discussion of the theological system of this great thinker has hitherto brought us in contact chiefly with its rational side. Here I have once ventured to say that it is "essentially unbiblical in style and occasionally in substance." We now come to a topic which will exhibit as no other could how loyal Park was to his understanding of the Bible, how it possessed to him the character of a true authority, and how he accepted its statements because they were biblical statements, although he believed them at the same time to be thoroughly rational, and sought to exhibit their rationality by all the force of his royal mind.

The topic has an element of special and personal interest

in the fact that the "new theology" which succeeded the theology of Park at Andover began by propounding certain eschatological principles which he believed to be utterly unscriptural, and which he opposed as he could to the end. It was perhaps the hardest statement with which he ever had to put up in his long life of theological controversy when the favorers of the new scheme claimed that they were simply following out to their logical conclusions his own positions as to a general atonement and human freedom. If his mind had at all failed, his testimony, at the age of about seventy-five, against the new theories would have little weight. But it had shown no signs of failure at ninety. The fact that he had continued to adhere to the views which he had earlier taught was the result of his convictions as to the meaning of the Bible. It shows the firmness and sincerity with which he held to the authority of the book.

We may limit our discussion to the question of future punishment, for this was to Park, and is still in the thinking of the day, the crucial point of the whole theme. It has been already pointed out that Park did not suppose that the great majority of the race would be lost, but he did believe that those who were finally impenitent when overtaken by death would remain in sin and would be punished by God forever. It is his support of this doctrine to which our attention is now called.

The evils which come upon men in consequence of sin and which possess the character of moral discipline are divided by Park into two classes, chastisement and punishment. Chastisements are all those pains inflicted upon a sentient being to prevent or correct sin, or to secure or increase the holiness of himself or other beings. All the evils coming upon us in consequence of sin in this life are of the nature of chastise-

ment. They come under the head of grace, and are reformatory, corrective, and directly beneficial in their character. Punishment is, however, something radically different. "Real punishment is pain inflicted by the Lawgiver upon the transgressor for the purpose of satisfying the Lawgiver's distributive justice. The pain must be inflicted by the Lawgiver, upon the law-breaker, because it is deserved, and in order to satisfy distributive justice." The meaning of distributive justice as earlier brought out must be held constantly in mind. It is determined by benevolence, for, as Park adds immediately to the definitions just given, "The design of distributive justice is to promote the welfare of the universe."

With these distinctions as to discipline, Park now proceeds to a more careful explanation of the design of punishment. "What is the design of God in satisfying his distributive justice? Why can he not let it go unsatisfied, as men often do?" This question he answers:—

"1. Punishment is designed to vindicate the character of the law. The threats of the law are necessary to the very idea of law. The infliction of the penalty is necessary to the reality of the threats, and hence to the maintenance of the character of the law.

"2. Hence punishment is designed to honor the character of the Lawgiver. It expresses his benevolence, because he thereby inflicts those evils which are necessary to the promotion of good. It honors his distributive justice, his holiness, and his veracity.

"3. Hence the design of punishment is to prevent sin in the subjects of the law, and to promote their holiness."

Up to this point many of the advocates of final restoration would be willing to keep company with Park. He has put punishment directly upon the basis of the divine benevolence.

But he next lays down the principle that "the punishment of the wicked will be eternal." In preparation for the proof of this principle, he lays down a number of preliminary propositions which contain substantially his apologetic for the doctrine. Thus he says:—

"God's government respects other worlds than this. The Universalist says that it is impossible to believe that God will make a race and punish the majority of that race. But he might punish all for the benefit of another race, or for many races, and still be benevolent. Positive benefits flow to others from condign punishment. One generation receives benefit from the summary visitation of the law upon a previous generation. Still we suppose that the majority of this race will be saved. Hell in the universe will occupy no greater place in comparison than the state's prison in the commonwealth. Again, man is free. He knows that if he sins he shall be punished, and he is free to sin or to refrain. It is the overlooking of this fact that gives so much difficulty with the subject of punishment."¹

But Park went even further than this in his apologetic. Universalism proceeds upon the supposition that wicked men will finally repent. Park meets this position by the proposition that "men may be punished even if they are penitent." He may have believed upon the whole that every penitent being would somehow be saved. He is reported to have once said that if the Devil would repent, God would find some way to save him. I myself never heard this remark, and have heard him say that "no atonement had been provided for the devils in hell,"—which at least hints strongly at the impossi-

¹ It is worthy of remark that one of the latest forms of Universalism, that of Dr. G. A. Gordon, of Boston, involves a philosophy of determinism. God is finally to have his way; and man's freedom is enswathed in a divine determinism.

bility of their salvation even if they should repent. All such questions, however, he regarded as belonging in the region of groundless and unprofitable speculations, for he believed firmly that men dying impenitent and the devils would continue obstinately in sin, and that eternally. Still he would invalidate the last refuge of his opposers, and hence he maintained, whatever might be our speculations, that even repentance did not carry with it the certainty of forgiveness, for "even Christ, though he was holy, was not perfectly happy, but was the greatest of all sufferers." He even said: "The holier a man is, the greater his remorse for his past sins. How the redeemed spirits can be happy in spite of their past sins is the mystery of the atonement of Christ."

The last turn of thought suggested the further remark that "the distinctive punishment of hell is remorse and the other painful emotions of conscience. Punishment is rational, that is, it is produced according to the nature of the mind. If there be physical punishment, it is only to excite the action of conscience. If a man sin, he shall forever reflect upon his sin, and shall let conscience work according to its own laws. This is the doctrine of eternal punishment."

Park is now prepared to begin his proof of the doctrine. He sets the rational arguments in the front.

1. Sin deserves eternal punishment. Sin deserves remorse of conscience. This is an axiom. Now remorse is perpetual. Guilt is personal and eternal. It is contrary to the first principles of the mind that punishment should diminish guilt. Once guilty, always guilty. This eternal remorse is eternal punishment. "The whole idea of hell is this: You have been free, you have chosen to pursue a certain course, you must reflect on it forever."

2. The nature of conscience proves eternal punishment.

There is a presumption that the mind will always act in accordance with its present laws. It is a law of conscience to inflict pain for sin. Left to itself, conscience will always reprove men of sin. If this is not to be so, God must interfere to prevent the normal action of this power which he has given men. He is under no obligation to do this, there is no evidence that he will, and the very nobility of the faculty of conscience shows how irrational it is to suppose that he will interfere. Men will be left to themselves.

3. The fitness of eternal punishment to the nature and tendencies of sin. The tendencies of a single sin are to unending evil. Every sin adds to the facility of committing another, and the sin of one man tempts another to sin. It is fit that the pain which thwarts these tendencies should be unending also.

4. Men may be punished as long as they sin, and they will sin forever. The mere possibility of eternal sin renders it impossible to prove universal salvation, for if men sin forever they will be punished forever. But there is more than a probability here. There is evidence that the impenitent at death will sin forever. Their persistence in sin to the end of this life leads us to infer that they will sin forever, unless we have evidence to the contrary, and there is no such evidence. They have remained depraved in spite of good influences, and we infer that they will remain so forever. More, they grow worse and worse under good influences. Affliction and chastisement serve only to harden them, if they remain impenitent. And, then, the Bible represents the impenitent as continuing in sin, as long as it speaks of them at all, for they are sinners through life, at death, in the intermediate state, at the judgment. Now, after the judgment certain great advantages will be lost to them, "from him that hath not shall be taken away

that which he hath." And there will be positive disadvantages, the power of habit, intensified and accumulated, the exasperating effects of unsuccessful punishment, etc. All these things will operate to perpetuate sin, just as similar things will operate to secure the eternal holiness of the repentant. In one passage eternal sin seems to be asserted of a certain class, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark iii. 19).

5. The holiness and sincerity of God. God is infinitely holy. He must be sincere in expressing this feeling, and the sincere expression of God's abhorrence of sin is eternal punishment.

6. The benevolence of God. We have already touched upon this argument, and remarked that Park could not maintain eternal punishment upon his theory of the divine action unless he could show how benevolence required it. This he now more fully undertakes. His successive points are:—

(1) The eternal and deserved punishment of sin does good. It results in an increase of holiness in the universe, because men are deterred from sin by the fact of punishment. It thus promotes the general good.

(2) As sin tends to work unending injury, benevolence requires that it have an unending connection with pain which will counteract the tendency of sin. This would not be so if men did not deserve to suffer, but they do deserve to suffer all that is useful in counteracting the evils which their sin has wrought.

(3) Benevolence requires of God to hate sin more than any object in the universe, and particularly to hate sin far more than pain; and benevolence requires him to express this hatred, for otherwise it cannot enter into that system of moral influ-

ences by which he is guiding the world to its salvation. The only fit expression of this hatred is eternal punishment.

(4) In the long run, benevolence requires what is fit and just; and eternal punishment fits eternal sin.

(5) Facts confirm the supposition that benevolence requires eternal punishment. In proportion to men's conception of the evil of sin they are convinced of the eternity of punishment. Even men who doubt it are obliged to use the scriptural threatenings to the evil-doer. The tendency of men is to form low estimates of any punishment that will end; eternal punishment is adapted to this peculiarity of the human mind.

7. The veracity of God proves eternal punishment.

Up to this point we have been busy with the rational argument which Park brings in favor of the doctrine. With this head he passes to the biblical doctrine, for it is his position that the Bible, which is God's word, has plainly declared that there will be eternal punishment, and hence if God has told us the truth, that is, if he is Truth himself, punishment for some must be eternal. As this is, after all, his decisive argument, we shall trace it somewhat carefully.

(1) Some sins are certainly threatened with eternal punishment, as the sin against the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 31, 32), the sins "unto death" (1 John v. 16, 17), and those who fall away into willful sin (Heb. vi. 4-8; x. 26, 27; 2 Peter ii. 20-22).

(2) Some sinners never will be saved, e. g., Judas (John xvii. 9-12; cf. Mark xiv. 21).

(3) The Scriptures declare that some men receive their good things chiefly in this life (Luke vi. 24; xvi. 25; Ps. xvii. 14).

(4) The Scriptures declare that men of a certain character shall not be saved (John iii. 36; Luke xiv. 24).

(5) The Scriptures declare that some men shall perish, or be destroyed (2 Thess. i. 9, etc.).

(6) Some sinners shall be subjected to the action of instruments of punishment which shall be eternal (Matt. iii. 12, etc.).

(7) The circumstances under which sinners are said to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven imply the doctrine of eternal exclusion (Luke xiii. 23-28; Matt vii. 21-23; Luke xvi. 26. Note that there is no intimation in these passages of repentance upon the part of the excluded.).

(8) The doctrine of election implies hopeless punishment of the non-elect.

(9) The constant and great contrast between the state of the righteous and the wicked.

(10) The express assertions that the punishment of the wicked shall be eternal. (a) The only words which writers of the New Testament had to express eternity (*αἰών, αἰώνιος*), they used. (b) The same words are used to express eternal misery as to express eternal happiness, or (c) to express the eternal attributes of God. (d) The same words are used to express the happiness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked in the same verse (Matt. xxv. 46). (e) As to the words *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* the predominant usage is in favor of their meaning unlimited duration. When not so used their signification is limited by the nature of the thing to which they are applied, or by positive announcements. There are no such limitations in respect to these words when used of future punishment. Our own use of the words "always" and "forever," "eternal" and "eternity," corresponds exactly to the biblical usage, and will suggest the modes in which they are used in the Bible.

(11) The Bible has taught the doctrine of eternal punishment in every way consistent with its style. It never says

"eternity in the strict sense of that word," but that is not the style of the Bible. It does, however, teach it by assertion and implication, in positive and negative forms, with all variety and great intensity. It could do no more.

We have given this disproportionate amount of space to the subject of Eschatology for the sake of illustrating, as already said, Park's loyalty to the Bible. He believed the doctrine eminently rational, because he believed in the possibility of a fixed evil will, and for such a will saw nothing fit except eternal punishment. But he believed the doctrine because it was biblical. Take the book as a religious authority, and interpret it according to the principles of objective exegesis, and you will necessarily get as its teaching the eternity of future punishments. Upon this ground Park unswervingly held the doctrine.

The true estimate of any thinker is the historical. He must be judged by his relations to his predecessors and his successors. It is therefore still too soon to say what place Park is ultimately to have in the history of American theology, for it is not at all evident what the actual outcome of the present period is to be.

In reference to his relation to his predecessors, it may be said that he was the eager student of them all, and that he incorporated into his own teaching every great idea which any of them had let fall. His pupils, if they subsequently turned their attention to the historical study of Edwards, or Hopkins, or Emmons, or Taylor, found themselves already familiar with the best these various writers had to say. Park had been truly teaching them New England Theology. He often quoted from great Germans by name. He did not so often mention by name the sources of his acquisitions from

his predecessors. He stood in the line of the New England development, and all that had been done was his and his pupils'.

There may be said to be two lines of New England development, that proceeding from Bellamy, of which the prominent members are in succession Drs. Edwards, Dwight, and Taylor; the other proceeding from Hopkins, the line embracing Emmons and then Park. But Emmons, though he was theologically a Hopkinsian, had received his education in theology from Smalley, a pupil of Bellamy; and Park drew much from Taylor, who next to Edwards was the great original mind in the New England school. Hence in Park the whole school is represented by lineal descent and in consequence of the loving study of unnumbered hours. Considered as a system, Park's does not go beyond the other New England divines. As a man he possessed a far wider outlook than any of them, and was acquainted with the results of the age in which he lived as none of them were acquainted with the thinking even of their own times. They were thinkers in a sense sometimes to exclude the element of mere learning. He was not only a thinker, but a man of wide reading. Yet the *crux* of his system is their *crux* also, the *crux* of the school as a whole. They saw a light gleaming in the distance, to which Park and Taylor approached much nearer; but none of them, not even Park, saw that light dispel the darkness that was spread by the deterministic philosophy of the Reformation.

As a preparation for the future, New England theology stripped off from the old Calvinism its forensic and its artificial elements. Park, in particular, emphasized the distinction between the essential and the incidental in the system. He cultivated in this, and in every other way, freedom of outlook. To him more than to any other member of the school,

but substantially to the school as a whole, to the spirit which it cultivated, and the hospitality which it showed to new ideas, is it due that Congregationalists have come over into the new period with less of friction and internal disturbance than almost any other Christian body, and are readjusting themselves rapidly, and apparently successfully, to the new thinking of the times.

The distinctive character of the present day is the introduction of the idea of evolution, and the effort to understand it and to digest it. The tendency has been to a disguised materialism, and, strange to say, to the old determinism, out of which original Calvinism came. It would seem as if a reaction must eventually set in which should give due prominence to the truths for which idealistic realism has stood, and to the acknowledgment of the truly supernatural in the religious history of mankind. When such a reaction attains any magnitude, the influence of Park may become again great. There is still a deal of power in the "philosophy of common sense," and a deal of valuable and imperishable material gathered by the painstaking exegesis of former days. It would be in vain to attempt to maintain that our own time equals in minute and exact exegetical scholarship the school of Moses Stuart. That school, and the allied school of dogmatic theology associated with it, has still much to teach us; and of both these schools the foremost figure was Park.